

About POSTERS and CHARTS . . .

Some suggestions by
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A poster is one type of visual material; a chart is another. They are similar; they are closely related, but they are not the same. They differ in purpose and in use; therefore they must differ in design.

A poster's job is to get attention - to stimulate interest - not to tell a complete story. Very often a good poster points the way to further information, but in itself it never tries to tell ALL. That is because posters are designed for display where people are hurrying by. If a poster tries to say too much, its message will be lost.

A billboard is a good example of a poster. It is a good example not because of its large size, but because it is brief, bold, and dramatic. You, the passer-by, must get its message even while you pass it.

Now a chart has the right to say more than a poster, for its place of display should give it time to tell its story - to put itself across. A good chart should be able to present the high lights or steps of a complete story, and it will be able to do this successfully if it is used in such places as offices, classrooms, or lecture rooms, where people will have time to read and study it. Posters may also be used in such places, of course, but the reverse is not true. Never send a chart in to do a poster's work.

But whichever you are making, a poster or a chart, this holds true: Don't have one thing on either of them that can be left off without sacrifice to the message. If you find yourself thinking, "Well now, maybe it wouldn't be too bad if I added so and so....." the answer is, "Yes, it would be too bad. There's no room for 'maybes' on a poster or chart. Everything should be a 'must.'"

And whichever you're making, a poster or a chart, you will need a good slogan or catch line. This is more important to a poster's success than to a chart's, but a good slogan helps a chart too. Try to come up with something short and attention-getting.

After you've thought up your slogan, you'll have to decide how it, as well as the rest of the words on your poster or chart, will be lettered. And of course, remember that even on a chart the number of words should be kept to the minimum.

But now for the lettering itself. There are many choices of materials open to you. If you have a way with letters, you may not need many suggestions along this line, but here are a few for those who have had little experience in lettering. Try a Speedball pen of the "B" series. Use it in India ink and follow these four rules:

1. Keep letters even and on a straight line. (Take time to rule in a light pencil line and make your letters toe the mark.)
2. Make vertical strokes parallel. (Practice this a little.
|||| //// \\\)
3. Leave more space between words than between letters.

These rules may be followed with any kind of lettering.

It may be that you'll like a "Brushpen" better than a "Speedball." This "Brushpen" is used by many clerks in stores to letter price signs and such. It is easy to manage. There is one caution about it however, only a special ink designed for it can be used. No other will work in this pen. This ink comes with the outfit.

For those who are terrified by the idea of lettering. There are good-looking commercial letters cut out of cardboard that may be glued or tacked onto posters and charts. Such are those called "Hall-craft." Then there are the Wilson gummed-back letters cut out of paper. Or you may like to stamp your letters on with a rubber stamp alphabet.

Bold, colored, block letters may be easily made with Scotch tape. Such letters are built up with vertical and horizontal strips of tape, and to make rounded letters, you merely cut the corners with a razor blade or sharp knife, and lift them off.

For smaller lettering, especially for use in material that is to be printed, "Artype" waxed-back letters are good; likewise those made with Leroy and Wrico mechanical lettering sets.

Now as to the illustrations. If you can draw you're off to a good start. Here's a suggestion though. Make your drawings as bold and as simple as possible. Especially is this true of posters. Carefully drawn eyelashes have no place on a poster face. Large areas of flat tones command attention from a distance because they carry. The silhouette is a very good bet for a poster. And even on charts, drawings should be bold and simple. So whether you use ink, poster paint, or crayon, try for strength in the illustrations.

If you're the type who "can't draw a straight line" - or even one that is crooked where it's supposed to be - your best bet is to lean heavily on colored pictures clipped from magazines or seed catalogs and on photographs. If you have much poster or chart making ahead of you, you owe it to yourself to start a file of both clippings and photographs. At some future time, you may have just the thing to paste on a poster or chart. You'll undoubtedly know what kind of pictures to look for as far as subject-matter is concerned. But you'll probably do well to clip big pictures whenever you can. They are better poster material, and they often work out better on charts than do tiny pieces of stuff. Clippings used on posters should be pasted on the board in big masses. Such masses may be left irregular in outline, or the clippings may be pasted to form a familiar shape; that of a star for instance, or of your own State or county if their outlines are well known.

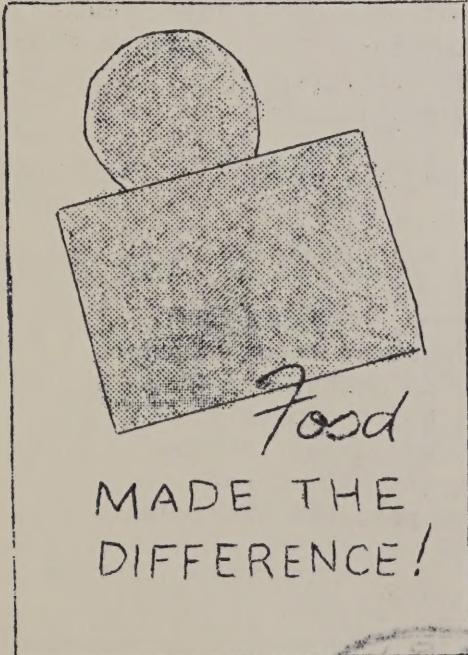
For a chart, each item may be illustrated by a cut-out picture. But don't have too much variety in the size of these pictures; don't have too many of them; and don't use any that are very small.

The same principles hold true where photographs are used as illustrations. On a poster, group the photographs to form massed shapes.

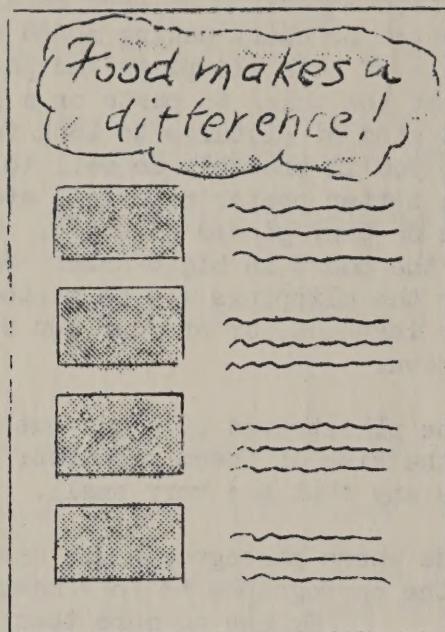
Or use no more than two photographs, tie them together, and play up one over the other.

For instance, suppose you are making a simple nutrition poster to tell a brief and general story of contrasts. Perhaps a photograph of a healthy rat and one of a rat suffering from serious vitamin deficiency will help put your story across. Cut one picture in a rectangular shape and one in a circular shape. Make the one of the healthy rat the larger. Tie the two together by lapping the large one over the small one just a bit.

Your slogan might be "Food made the difference." If just the tip of the initial letter runs up into the larger photograph this too will help unify the whole poster.



In making a chart on the same subject, you can tell a more detailed story. You may use several photographs of rats showing the results of particular vitamin deficiencies.



Do not have too many on one chart, though. It would be better to make several charts than to have one chart full of packed information and small pictures. It is simple and orderly to keep the illustrations in a chart the same size, and to line them up one under the other. A note of novelty is desirable in a poster, but in a chart it is not as important as order. You want your chart to be easy to understand. For a touch of showmanship on a chart, you may do something with the slogan. Either letter it on a different color paper than the background, or letter it in a bright color.

You might like to try photographs on lightly tinted boards instead of on stark white. Sometimes a warm tint is flattering to photographs, but this will depend upon the quality of the photographs. Try them first by just laying them against the board before sticking them down.

So here are some suggestions. May they help you - and good luck!

You will note that a number of materials have been named. There are, no doubt, other firms manufacturing equipment and products similar to those mentioned, and we do not wish to imply this Department's endorsement of certain materials to the possible detriment of others.

